

A Reexamination of The Consequences of Teacher Evaluation on Teacher Professional Development in Oman

Dr. Hamed Al Yahmadi¹, Salema Al Barwani²

Abstract

A well-established teacher evaluation policy has proven its efficiency and effectiveness in promoting a lifelong professional growth strategy for teachers. Many researchers and practitioners attempted over the years to study the impact of teachers' evaluations on teachers' professional development, which led to altering the purpose of conducting the evaluations from merely addressing the educational institutions' needs. A decade ago, there were a few attempts to study the impact of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development within the context of Oman's educational system. This study seeks to investigate the perspectives of teachers and evaluators regarding the role of teacher evaluation in fostering teacher professional development. Moreover, it pursues the consequences of teacher evaluation policy on teacher professional development in Oman. A qualitative approach was utilized by means of interviews, observation, and document analysis. The study revealed that the level of satisfaction and motivation regarding the teacher evaluation system is low among many teachers and evaluators. Their dissatisfaction is grounded in several reasons, such as a lack of incentives, a lack of commitment, and a shortage of participation in the decision-making process pertaining to teacher evaluation. Most of them believe that the existence of poor-performing teachers in schools is due in large part to the lack of efficient implementation of the evaluation policy.

Keywords: *teacher evaluation, professional development, Oman.*

1. Introduction

As the years went by, education reforms to keep up with regional and global changes in the teaching and learning sectors, became one of the major focuses of educational policy debates and research efforts. These efforts highlighted the need to achieve excellence in teaching and learning by seizing opportunities to foster and enhance national competencies and implementing high-quality professional development policies and programs, as stated by many scholars, including (Delvaux et al., 2013; Peterson and Peterson, 2006; Navidinia, 2021; and Alyahmadi & Alfahdi, 2014). Therefore, the focus shifted to providing suitable professional developmental plans in which policymakers use teacher evaluation policies to measure teachers' competencies and ensure accountability.

Many researchers and practitioners attempted over the years to study the impact of teachers' evaluations on teachers' professional development, which led to altering the purpose of conducting the evaluations from merely addressing the educational institutions' needs to "serve a double cause: on the one hand accountability and on the other hand improvement" (Delvaux et al., 2013, p. 2). Thus, many models were

¹ Faculty of General Education, Arab Open University, Muscat, Oman, hamed.y@aou.edu.om

² Foundation Studies Unit, Arab Open University, Muscat, Oman, salima.b@aou.edu.om

developed for these purposes. The Sultanate of Oman is not different, as currently teacher evaluation tools are utilized to positively improve teachers' professional development and, therefore, schools' performances (Alyahmadi & Alfahdi, 2014). However, this was not always the case, as the educational reforms in Oman underwent many stages and changes.

Nevertheless, it is significant to mention that the development of Oman's educational system could be identified in three stages. The first stage is from 1970 to the mid-1990s; in this stage, the focus was on creating educational infrastructures to increase educational accessibility due to geographical barriers. The second stage, from the mid-1990s to 2000, witnessed many educational reforms that aimed at providing equal learning chances to both genders and enhancing the quality of the educational system. Finally, In the third and last stage, which is currently in progress, the focus is on reviewing and evaluating the policies and the educational systems in addition to improving academic outcomes (Al Shabibi et al, 2018). In this stage, the ministry's concern is to provide the students with continuous learning opportunities, capacity, knowledge, and skills that will prepare them to join the workforce when they graduate. Therefore, the ministry worked on developing and improving the curriculum and teaching practices. The former was remodeled and redesigned to suit the current vision of Oman and to provide the students with a personalized learning experience. While the latter were monitored and enhanced by implementing a well-established teacher evaluation system that not only evaluates how much the teacher managed to cover from the curriculum but also monitors the professional growth that took place (Nasser,2019).

A decade ago, there were a few attempts to study the impact of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development within the context of Oman's educational system. One of these attempts is an article titled "The Consequences of Teacher Evaluation on Teacher Professional Development in Oman" published by the International Journal of Education and Research. This research focused on teachers' perceptions of the consequences of the teacher evaluation process and practices for teacher professional development in Oman. After a strain of interviews, observations, and reviewing related ministry documents, it was astonishingly concluded that teachers' evaluations in Oman have minimal impact on teachers' performance and their professional development outcomes, and according to the instructors who were interviewed, the ineffective implementation of the teacher's evaluation procedure is the primary cause of some teachers' low performance in Oman schools (Alyahmadi et al., 2014). These findings contradict the educational developmental plans in Oman, therefore, the recommendations according to (Alyahmadi et al., 2014) were to reanalyze and reconsider the organizational, technical, and environmental factors that contribute to a successful implementation of the evaluation process.

2. Objectives of the Study

In light of the study conducted by (Alyahmadi et al., 2014) which was previously noted, this study aims to reexamine these perceptions and consequences of teacher evaluation on teachers' professional development after a decade. Also, it aims to determine whether teachers' evaluation policy in Oman has improved or not over the last decade and whether it is sufficiently and favorably influencing teachers' professional development in 2023 or not. This study is significant because it takes into consideration the speed of educational reform and the shift in perspectives in the new era and accordingly assesses whether the changes made to the teachers' evaluation system are effective and efficient in the sense that they provide long-term opportunities for the teachers to grow professionally. This increased demand to conduct such studies is justified by the amount of money invested each year in enhancing teachers' capabilities and student academic performance,

including the urge to meet the labor market's needs and fulfill its requirements (Nasser,2019).

More precisely, it seeks to answer the following questions: 1) What are the perspectives of teachers and evaluators regarding the teacher evaluation role in fostering teacher professional development, and what are the teacher professional development modules or responsibilities employed by the evaluators? 2) What are the consequences of teacher evaluation policy on teacher professional development in the Sultanate of Oman in 2023 and what has changed within the last decade?

3. Theoretical Framework

A well-established teacher evaluation policy has proven its efficiency and effectiveness in promoting a lifelong professional growth strategy for teachers, as stated by Strong & Tucker (2003) "High-quality performance evaluation can become a mechanism to promote lifelong learning and instructional effectiveness for teachers" (p. 10). As is demonstrated, many practitioners and scholars emphasize the importance of setting out clear teacher evaluation criteria and standards, which ultimately ensure maintaining their self-esteem even if the final assessment included some negative aspects (Alyahmadi et al., 2014, p. 129). In this regard, the main two themes to be discussed in this section are the evaluation of teacher performance and teacher professional development.

3.1 Teacher Performance Evaluation

Prior studies confirm that to ensure teachers' competency and accountability, there are two fundamental assessments to be conducted: the formative assessment and the summative assessment (Delvaux et al., 2013). In other words, the formative evaluation seeks to enhance teachers' professional development, while summative evaluations are used to ensure teachers' accountability, which refers, as stated by Alyahmadi (2011) to teachers taking responsibility for enhancing students learning outcomes. Nasser Ramzi (2019) and Mohammad A. Khan (2015) elaborated on the definitions of both formative and summative evaluations by stating that the former is a continuous process that acknowledges the importance of practice and hence targets the improvement of different practice-related skills such as managing feedback, performance improvement, and communication, besides professional growth. The latter, on the other hand, is used to provide the basis for establishing administrative decisions like hiring, promotions, and even dismissal. For instance, the summative evaluation in Pakistan, according to A. Khan (2015), is regarded as a sensitive issue as the report often determines whether teachers are qualified to teach or not. L. Sinnebox (2020) described the formative assessment as non-evaluative, ongoing, informal, and dynamic, while he described the summative evaluation as cumulative, traditional, formal, and static.

These two components of teacher evaluation, according to (Alyahmadi et al., 2014) should be utilized in an aligned and systematic manner to avoid any conflict, even though the conflict in this situation might be inevitable. In general, a supportive, collaborative, and thoughtful approach to the evaluation process is necessary to ensure the effectiveness and balance between the formative and summative evaluations (Alyahmadi et al., 2014). According to Peterson and Peterson (2006), for the teacher evaluation process to be effective and valid, multiple data sources should be analyzed and taken into consideration, including formative and summative assessments such as students' achievement data, peer review of instructional materials, and student reports (surveys, focus groups), etc. Peterson and Peterson (2006) justified this by reinforcing the fact that teaching practice is generally very complex and, therefore, it is difficult to collect sufficient data and reach a judgment using a single data source only. In this regard, multiple data sources are required to provide a fair and accurate analysis (Peterson and Peterson, 2006). Another factor that determines the effectiveness of the evaluation

process is whether it was carried out by a professional, unbiased evaluator or not, as this plays a major role in increasing teachers' satisfaction and motivation levels (Nasser,2019).

3.2 Teacher professional development.

Teacher professional development refers to a long-term goal that aims to facilitate teachers' pedagogical and professional knowledge (Navidinia, 2021). Teacher professional development was traditionally viewed as the number of workshops and conferences they attended, regardless of their efficiency and relevance. Nowadays, practitioners, both evaluators and teachers, realize the importance of professional development as a means of enhancing knowledge, learning, mastering lifelong skills, and seizing opportunities to grow in their profession. This continuous and lifelong process is best promoted in a collaborative environment where "teachers are paired off in teams, observing each other, sharing reflections on practice, and developing professional development plans together." (Alyahmadi et al., 2014, p. 130).

These collaborative efforts are usually documented in the form of peer reviews, peer evaluations, and classroom observations, which are monitored and reviewed closely by evaluators and decision-makers. Decision-makers in different educational institutions usually follow multiple models to organize this effort in a systematic way, as previous studies have shown that there is no ideal professional development model that is likely to meet needs of teachers and be appropriate for the institute at the same time. (Alyahmadi et al., 2014). In this regard, many researchers and scholars, including Alyahmadi (2014), despite the belief there is no ideal model to be followed, propose the following models as popular and beneficial in enhancing teachers' professional growth if the integration process is well-established. They are:

- a. Individually guided staff development: Employing educators to experiment with pedagogies and teaching methods, study scholarly publications, and talk with colleagues about the teaching and learning process.
- b. Observation/assessment: Which relates to peer observation procedures, senior teachers can mentor new teachers to provide suggestions for improving classroom management abilities and academic performance in general.
- c. Involvement in a development/improvement process: Including developing new materials and curriculums.
- d. Inquiry: This is based on the teacher's ability to question their performance validly and to direct their action plans.
- e. Training: Including analyzing ideas, putting skills to the test in specific circumstances, gaining performance feedback, and worksite coaching.

In the process of reexamining the study conducted by (Alyahmadi et al., 2014) it was taken into consideration that the previous models were the foundation of the investigation process as the researchers believed that they would facilitate gaining a deeper insight into the consequences of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development. Therefore, the current study adopts the same approach.

3.3 Previous Studies Conducted in the Sultanate of Oman

Alyahmadi et al. administered their research in 2014 which focused on the impact of teacher evaluation policy on teacher professional development in the Sultanate of Oman in Al Sharqia (North) Governorate. The data were collected through conducting formal and informal face-to-face interviews and analyzing field observations and documents including official Ministry documents. The researchers asserted that, in practice, teacher assessment in Oman has minimal influence on the professional growth of teachers. The interviewees acknowledged some increase in their competence in several professional

areas, but this progress did not justify the investment of time, money, and effort. Teachers' low level of satisfaction regarding the evaluation system was due to confidentiality, a lack of clarity in criteria and standards, and excessive reliance on classroom observation (Alyahmadi et al., 2014). That said, according to Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen (2018) the educational system in Oman is facing a few critical challenges that could explain the minimal influence of the evaluation process and teachers' low satisfaction levels. One of the main challenges is the lack of supporting programs except for induction meetings which are conducted for a few days at the very beginning of the year before they start teaching and experiencing the real challenges.

In order to better understand the effects of an effective evaluation on teacher performance and professional development, Moza Al-Malki and Katie Weir undertook a comparative analysis in 2014. The analysis of the evaluation standards and guidelines provided in documents on pre-service teachers at both Griffith University (Australia) and Rustaq College (Oman) was the main objective. This investigation revealed that Rustaq College's incoming professors "are likely to be a compliant student-trainee, whereas Australian graduate pre-service teachers are more likely to be 'professionally qualified to teach and classroom-ready.'" (Al-Malki & Weir, 2014, p.28)

That is mainly because both of these educational institutes adopt different criteria and standards to assess pre-service teachers, therefore, both embrace different perspectives on what an ideal teacher is. For instance, at Rustaq College, teachers are evaluated according to their abilities to manage a classroom, deliver a lesson within a limited timeframe, and abide by school rules and bylaws. At the same time that pre-teachers at Rustaq College are treated as trainees and students, pre-service teachers at Griffith University are being treated as professional teachers, and they are assessed based on different standards such as pedagogical and professional competencies, teaching strategies used to prepare a series of lessons, having a growth mindset, and maintaining healthy and professional relationships at the workplace. These distinctions in visions and evaluation policies resulted in producing non-reflective teachers at Rustaq College that are not able to monitor and direct their progress and are ultimately unable to follow a self-developmental plan (Al-Malki & Weir, 2014). A review highlighted by (Al Shabibi et al, 2018) reinforced the importance of increasing teachers' training hours that take place in real-life settings in schools or universities. Nonetheless, the (World Bank, 2012) report as cited by (Al Shabibi et al, 2018) stated that only a small amount of their training occurs in real classrooms; for example, only 6% of the total course credits are allocated for teaching practice in SQU and only 5% in Nizwa University.

However, all these studies cannot be considered conclusive because the findings cannot be generalized to another context, nor can they be generalized to include all the educational institutes and systems in Oman.

4. Methodology

This descriptive and investigative research is conducted utilizing the qualitative approach. That is because other approaches usually do not support inquiring deeply into the complexity of a problem that is rooted in leniency toward institutional systems such as schools. Therefore, qualitative, naturalistic, and interpretive research are required to investigate hugely multifaceted issues (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007).

For this research, four cycle-one schools in Muscat general directorate, Oman, were selected as the study places with four teachers, two headmasters, and two supervisors as the key informants. Information collected was conducted via interviews with the key informants, analysis of the policy of the Ministry of Education, and some related documents issued by the schools or written by the informants. These documents are related to teacher's evaluation, school supervision, and teacher's professional

development. Each informant was interviewed once; sometimes follow-up interviews were conducted to seek more confirmation. A semi-structured interview style was utilized through open-ended questions. The researchers designed the questions to inquire into the evaluation role, procedures, and impact on the teacher's professional development. Unstructured questions were also extended during the interview period according to the reactions of the informants. These types of questions were very useful in prompting deeper information.

The collected data were transcribed as well as coded based on the identified questions. Appropriately, coded data were then sophisticated into patterns and sorted based on the emerging themes. Data inferred from Interviews were additionally cross-validated with the documents collected from schools, such as minutes of meetings, supervision reports, summative evaluation reports, and relevant circulars issued by the Ministry of Education and Muscat General Directorate. Moreover, internal headmaster memos were analyzed. Every case was analyzed separately, and then all eight cases were studied and cross-analyzed. A cross-case analysis of the data accumulated from face-to-face interviews with all eight informants is a critical attribute of the research design as it facilitates the validity and reliability process (Yin, 2014). Because only eight informants participated in this research, the results cannot be generalized to the whole sultanate. Nonetheless, the valuable information collected would be adequate to develop some hints about the current system of teacher evaluation procedures in cycle-one schools in the designated directorate and the challenges and limitations the evaluators confront in their evaluation process.

5. Findings

The data that was collected from this study revealed some interesting issues related to teacher evaluation in these four schools selected in Muscat's general directorate. The first round of interviews revealed that the supervisors, as well as the headmasters, conducted the evaluation regularly. They believe that they assisted teachers and directly supported them in their work. They believe that they encourage teachers' professional development by visiting them in class and giving them valuable feedback. According to the next round of interviews, and the mutual inquiry, it is clear that the supervisors and the headmasters are doing the evaluation, but not to the extent that this evaluation has an impact on teacher professional development. The cross-case analysis indicated that these evaluators lack the efficiency and capability to evaluate, which consequently affects their professional development level.

5.1 The First Study Question

This question is about the teacher's and evaluators' perspectives regarding the role of teacher evaluation in fostering teacher professional development, and what are the teacher professional development modules or responsibilities employed by the evaluators? The responses obtained are classified in teacher evaluation as a role of the evaluators and the five models of professional development, namely, peer-observation, individually guided involvement, inquiry, and training. The responses provided by the evaluators and the teachers according to the participants in the tasks are organized in the table below.

Table (1) Professional development model implemented in the evaluation process.

(Happening, incomplete, and low level)

PD model	Peer-observation	Individually guided development	Involvement process	Inquiry	Training
Headmaster 1	Happening	Low Level	Incomplete	Low Level	Happening
Headmaster 2	Happening	Happening	Happening	Incomplete	Happening
Supervisor 1	Happening	Happening	Happening	Incomplete	Happening
Supervisor 2	Happening	Happening	Happening	Incomplete	Happening

Teacher 1	Happening	Happening	Incomplete	Happening	Happening
Teacher 2	Incomplete	Happening	Low Level	Low Level	Happening
Teacher 3	Happening	Happening	Happening	Happening	Happening
Teacher 4	Incomplete	Happening	Happening	Incomplete	Happening

5.1.1 Teacher professional development

First, all eight informants participating in the study are aware of the role of evaluation in the school system. They are also aware of the crucial role of teacher professional development in teacher professionalism and student achievement. However, they were mainly hesitant about the concept of teacher evaluation. For most of them, teachers' evaluation was nothing more than a routine task anticipated by policymakers. The teacher evaluation with them is done haphazardly, regardless of its important purposes. While all informants believed teacher evaluation was a justification for testing teachers' performance, none stated a developmental approach toward teacher evaluation. Noticeably, informants were uncertain about the link between teacher evaluation and any of the various professional development models. The headmasters, supervisors, and teachers' views of teacher evaluation seemed very restricted and concentrated on the investigation, which is primarily conducted rarely and shortly according to the circumstances. The evaluation session was conducted just for routine purposes. As Rashid, a teacher, has articulated, "It is an obligation of the MOE to conduct evaluations frequently. And they fulfill evaluation mostly by appraising teacher performance, and occasionally they use the appraisal outcome to punish teachers". The same assertion has been heard from Ali, a teacher with 14 years of experience, who said that "I do not think that most evaluators consider teacher evaluation as a scaffolding means to promote teacher professional growth. I believe that it is performed purely for obeying the instructions or observing teacher performance." Approximately most of the teachers in the study were not able to clarify the purpose of teacher evaluation. In its place, teacher evaluation was viewed from a narrow viewpoint as a direction from the head that must be followed.

5.1.2 Peer Observation/ Assessment.

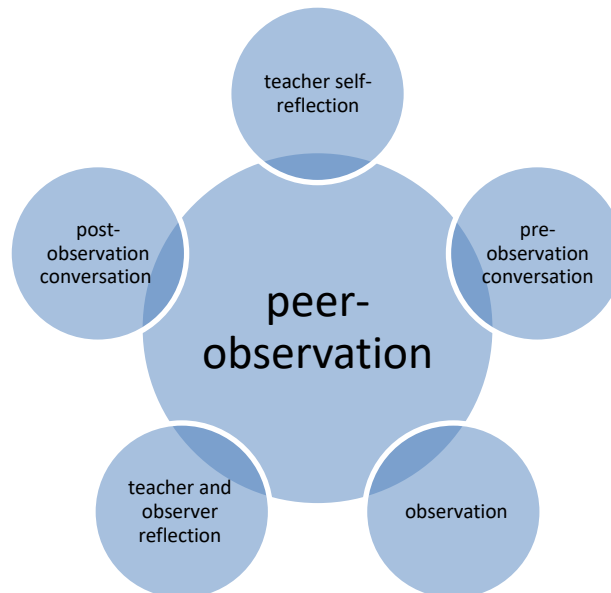


Figure 2: the five stages of peer observation for teaching adopted by Ponticell et al. (2018)

Among the five various professional development models, all four evaluators—two headmasters and two supervisors—considered peer observation as the key model of teacher professional development. It is improving teachers' performance and classroom

control. Peer observation is one of the regular opportunities for supporting the professional growth of teachers. This includes five consecutive stages or a cycle comprising a pre-observation discussion with the teacher, observation of teaching, analysis and interpretation of the observation, a post-observation discussion with the teacher, and analysis of the preceding four stages. Sadly, merely one stage of the peer observation cycle, the observation of the teaching stage, is performed in all four cycles in one school in Muscat, contributing to the current research. Moreover, observation of the teaching stage is performed only once or twice a year, and the comments are recorded in a form implemented by the Ministry of Education. The short comments and the items verified lack data for a thorough investigation, interpretation, and description of the teaching practices.

On the other hand, post-observation meetings are seldom conducted. If organized at all, they seem to be in the form of briefing conferences. Through the post-observation meetings, the evaluators (headmasters and supervisors) provide a few pieces of advice for teachers to enhance their teaching performance and persuade their weak points and improve them. They did nothing else. According to a headmaster (Rashid), "When I recognize that the performance of any teacher is lower than our expectations, with low-class management, I meet the teacher in my office and provide him with some educational advice that, with no hesitation, will raise his ability to manage his classroom. With this advice, I hope the teacher will develop". Purely identifying the weak points with the teacher without identifying the good strategies is not useful; It is improbable to bring about long-term improvement in the learning/teaching process. The present implementation of the peer-observation strategy provides teachers with a small room to consider their practices and follow up on the strong and weak areas. The current study revealed that peer observation is conducted for no more than evaluating performance. It is not considered part of teacher professional development. It seems that confusion exists between summative evaluation, which aims to take decisions related to the teacher and formative evaluation, which seeks to promote professionalism with the teacher.

Summative evaluation delivers judgment about the overall performance of a teacher during the school year. On the other hand, formative evaluation, by contrast, is an effective means by which evaluators provide helpful feedback to the teacher, identifying both strong and weak points, and recommending approaches to improve performance (Alyahmadi, 2012).

5.1.3 Individually guided development.

After the drastic shift that the perspective of teacher's professional development influence underwent, this shift has been considered according to Northcote et. al. (2017) as a 'new image of teachers' growth, a 'new model' of teachers' learning, a 'revolution' in education, and even a 'new paradigm' of professional development. Accordingly, teachers are also responsible for their professional growth and are treated as active learners who are involved in the tangible tasks of teaching, assessments, observation, and reflection. They are encouraged to design their professional development plans and, therefore, identify their professional learning goals and needs. So, this self-directed approach to learning enables the teachers to identify their problems and by so doing, find solutions. Several examples of individually guided activities that teachers could develop are worth mentioning like professional portfolios, reflective journaling, and video/audio self-assessments (Cetin & Bayrakc, 2019). Conducting these activities has many advantages such as flexibility and the fact that they provide an excellent setup for self-analysis, personal reflection, and thoughtful decision-making.

In this study, most of the informants acknowledged the importance of these activities in enhancing teachers' professional growth and motivation. One of them, Lama (a teacher), stated that "self-guided learning plays a significant role in the evaluation process, especially when the teacher takes into consideration all their strengths and weaknesses,

and works on improving them." Likewise, Marwa (a teacher) elaborated that this model is essential because it focuses on enhancing teachers' motivation, which is a key factor in the development process. However, according to Muna (a headmaster who works at the same school), this model of individually guided development and self-directed learning is not reliable, and on a personal level, it is not one of her favorite learning strategies. To her, not all teachers are passionate enough to take ownership of their professional growth; on the contrary, they tend to believe that it is the role of the management to work on enhancing their academic performance and, therefore, providing them with learning opportunities like workshops and seminars.

5.1.4 Involvement in the development process

One of the most essential methods to encourage tutors to acquire new knowledge or master new skills is to involve them in various developmental processes, such as reviewing or designing a new program or curriculum and developing action plans to enhance instruction or solve an issue. Designing or reviewing a new curriculum, for instance, might require the designated designer or reviewer to acquire further content knowledge or reconsider relevant research. However, refining content knowledge and mastering new skills are not the only benefits of this model, as it also enhances tutors' abilities to work collaboratively and be involved in the decision-making process. In other words, for teachers to produce curriculum efficiently and contribute to their professional growth, they must be actively and continuously involved in the learning process (Voogt et. al., 2016).

When the informants were asked about whether they usually participate in the developmental process of curriculums or not, their replies were controversial. Some instructors at primary schools, like Nora, Huda, and Maryam, have confirmed that they solely take part in the reviewing process. While Amal (a teacher) stated that their role is limited to conducting workshops for their colleagues to introduce new curricula, others, like Muna (a headmaster), argued that teachers are not involved in the designing or reviewing process. This argument was also confirmed by (Lama) when she stated that teachers at schools have no role in the developmental reviewing processes of curriculums and that the responsibility of fulfilling such processes is usually carried out by the Department of Curriculum Evaluation at the Ministry of Education. Al-Jardani et. al. (2012) pointed out that this department was founded in 2015 and that their role is to develop all curricula based on the learning objectives in Oman. Nevertheless, according to Al-Jardani et. al. (2012), teachers are usually only involved in the reviewing process and not the development part. In other words, "there is a lack of [teacher] involvement in the entire teaching/learning system" (alyahmadi,2022, p:70).

Surprisingly, all informants acknowledged and agreed that involving teachers in all developmental processes including designing and planning programs has a significant role in enhancing their professional development. According to Lama "participating in the development process has a positive impact on enhancing teachers' professional development as they will be encouraged to be acquainted with different teaching strategies and methods, including developing the ability to identify errors in the curriculum and suggest alternatives". Similarly, both Amal and Marwa agreed that involving teachers would mean giving them opportunities to gain new knowledge regarding teaching and learning strategies.

5.1.5 Inquiry/Action Research

This model of professional development provides teachers with opportunities to reflect on their teaching practices and improve them through asking questions, searching for answers, and ultimately solving problems. Action research is "a strategy teachers use to reflect on their teaching for professional development and improve the quality of education" (Salih and Omar, 2022, p.10). This enables teachers to question and challenge their educational and pedagogical practices apart from any typical assumptions, including

conventional practices, imposed learning outcomes, and curriculums (Salih and Omar, 2022). Therefore, the main aim of implementing this model is to enhance general practices and to comprehend and generate knowledge related to instructive practices and their complications (Almahdi, 2019). In other words, this model of professional development provides teachers with opportunities to improve their analytical and critical skills while being engaged in the process of solving a real-life issue. This process of inquiry-based research operates in a sequence of forming a plan, executing it, observing, reflecting, and developing an action plan to address the problem. The first three phases are related to identifying the issue, setting a plan to address the issue, and analyzing all the available information about the problem. This cycle ends with the last two phases, in which the researcher focuses on analyzing the causes of the problem and deciding on an action plan to overcome the problem (Salih and Omar, 2022)

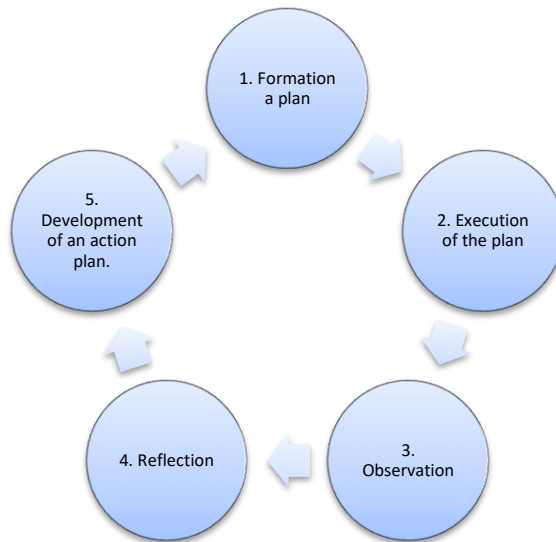


Figure 3: the five phases of action research adopted from (Salih and Ismail Omar, 2022).

Most of the informants in this study confirmed that their schools support and encourage them to conduct action research, and all of them acknowledged its importance in enhancing pedagogical practice in particular and teachers' professional development in general. However, three of the participants admitted that they had never conducted any action research before. While the other elaborated that they conducted the research for the sake of pursuing a master's degree. Accordingly, two of them stated that they have participated in undertaking two action research papers: one of them was related to reinforcing positive behaviors, and the outcome was (My School Law) and the other paper is about questioning skills in classrooms.

5.1.6 Training

This model of professional development is the most common, and it is the one that teachers and educators around the world are most familiar with. In this respect, Williams (2022) described this training model as a popular model that enables educators to master and learn a new set of skills from an expert. He criticized this model by stating that teachers usually play more of a passive role in the sessions and that the topics discussed are merely theoretical and not related to real classroom issues. Within the context of Oman, Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen (2018) reported that the results of a survey conducted in 2009 on 150 teachers in five regions showed that teachers' main criticism of in-service training is that it is based on theories only with no relation to the practical application of pedagogies. Also, it doesn't help them address what they face daily. Alyahmadi (2022, p: 70) asserts that there are "not enough training programs for teachers, principals, and supervisors. Those that do occur are not well designed to meet the teachers' requirements" In addition, instructors typically lack adequate knowledge of the

material they deliver. Finally, the courses are too short, therefore, no lasting impact is usually noticed.

However, it is worth mentioning that The Specialized Center for the Professional Training of Teachers in Oman, which was launched in 2014, is a key player in the reform initiative of the Ministry of Education. According to their portal, they spent 1532 training days, with 5532 participants enrolled and benefiting from the center's services, and 2532 trainees expected to graduate in the current round (The Specialized Centre for the Professional Training of Teachers, n.d.). Additionally, The Center's primary goal is to enhance the standard of student learning, and it seeks to do so by fostering the professional growth of the teaching sector. In this regard, Muna (a headmaster) at a primary school, indicated that the training model is the best model to follow as it promotes the quality of the academic practices, but attending these training sessions and workshops regularly could be challenging considering the workload. All the other informants, on the other hand, acknowledged the importance of attending the training sessions and their positive impact on their professional growth; they confirmed that they usually attend and participate in an average of 4 to 10 workshops per academic year; these workshops are usually conducted in and outside the school. However, their main concern is the workload and time management. As Al-Yahmadi, H & Al-Shammakhi, K. (2021, p: 92) "Overload teaching timetable and administrative paperwork were among the most obstacles that hinder teachers from practicing and implementing PLC [teacher professional communities] activities inside their schools".

5.2 The Second Study Question

The second question of this study aimed at reexamining the consequences of teacher evaluation policy on teacher professional development in the Sultanate of Oman in 2023 and what has changed within the last decade. According to (Alyahmadi et al., 2014), teacher evaluation policy in Oman had a minimal impact due to the inefficient implementation of procedures; he also stated that there were three factors that constrained its efficiency. In this study, these three factors will be reinvestigated and reanalyzed, and that is because an effective policy of evaluation plays a crucial role in implementing school reform and improving student achievement unless they engage in continuous instructional observation that promotes and enhances their professional development (Al-Kiyumi & Hammad, 2019).

5.2.1 Overreliance on Classroom Observation.

As (Alyahmadi et al., 2014) remarked, the only technique that was used to evaluate teachers in the last decade was classroom observation, and in many countries around the world, including Oman, this was most of the time an ineffective tool to use. As (Al Balushi & Mat Saad, 2021) stated that there is a need to better understand the factors that can make such a primary tool in the evaluation process ineffective. These factors according to them, are a lack of training for the observers, an existing system of evaluation from senior management, and the fact that instead of focusing on teachers' professional growth or raising the standard of teaching and learning, the purpose of the classroom visits is usually to assess instructors' performance.

However, most informants agreed that this had undergone substantial development in 2022 and 2023 as a new performance appraisal system (Ejada) was introduced. This new performance appraisal system comprises three fundamental stages that start with setting the objectives and key results through the development of performance cards as per the school's measurable performance indicators, which also represent an agreement between the teacher and the evaluator. Then, it moves to calculate the percentage of actual achievement and provide feedback, and finally, the cycle ends with calculating the results of the performance appraisal. In other words, teachers are being assessed based on various criteria that contribute to the institution's annual plan, the development and

improvement of the work, and efficiently running routine day-to-day activities. (Ministry of Labour, 2021).

According to their portal and a guide to the application of the individual performance measurement system they published in 2021, this system seeks to develop crucial tools and guidelines for promoting a culture of outstanding job performance. It attempts to improve performance evaluation procedures to achieve effective performance management, encourage employees' additional efforts, and support performance growth. The system involves a range of significant principles, including flexibility, transparency, objectivity, sustainability, renovation and innovation, enablement, concentration, complementarity, inclusiveness, governance, fairness, and credibility (Ministry of Labour, 2021).

5.2.2 The Confidentiality of the Summative Report.

Informants in the previous study conducted by (Alyahmadi et al., 2014) claimed that lack of transparency and the fact that teachers could not openly know their performance ratings, or their weaknesses and strengths were another cause for the lack of motivation and low-performance growth levels. However, the new system is built on transparency and credibility as one of its main values. According to the guide that was formerly mentioned the tutor usually meets the evaluator multiple times throughout the three stages, and it is considered one of his/her responsibilities to discuss the objectives at the beginning of the cycle and provide periodic follow-up and constant feedback on a timely basis throughout the year. According to the guide, the overall results are usually approved by the superior manager and circulated to the teachers by the end of the year (Ministry of Labour, 2021). Similarly, (Hussin et al., 2017) reported that there should be enough resources available for the implementation process, as well as a system of clearly defined roles and hierarchical control, to monitor the actions of implementers. Additionally, they reinforced the importance of the attitudes of the implementers and how well they comprehend the policy, whether they believe it will help or hurt them personally or the community, and the intensity with which they accept or reject it will undoubtedly have an impact on their attitudes.

5.2.3 The Evaluation Standards.

One of the limitations of the previous policy of teacher evaluation was the vagueness of its criteria, as some standards were broad, general, and unclear. This generality and vagueness led to subjective opinions and confusion for both the evaluator and the teacher. As confirmed by (Hussin et al., 2017) this kind of policy needs to be based on clear objectives and standards, which are vital to effective implementation. They argued that "Clear and understandable purposes can be implemented more easily and precisely than a set of vague, complicated purposes" (Hussin et al., 2017, p: 26).

In this regard, the new system of performance appraisal (Ejada) involved the teacher in the objective-making process after reviewing the institution's annual plan. Nowadays, teachers are responsible for planning their annual key objectives with the evaluator or (line manager) at the beginning of the year and then at the beginning of each performance cycle along with discussing the key results and feedback at the end of each cycle. In other words, these objectives are extracted from the institutions' annual plan which is derived from the government's directions and strategic plans. Then, the evaluator or (line manager) oversees reviewing the institution's goals and the annual plan and uses them as a reference to develop specific indicators and objectives that will serve as a guide for tutors as they establish their goals for the performance cycle (Ministry of Labour, 2021). In this regard, (Lama) stated that: "the evaluation policy has undergone a shift in its implementation procedures from a system that is based on general, and rigid objectives to a flexible system that embraces the freedom of developing objectives."

References

- Al Shabibi, A. S., & Silvennoinen, H. (2018). Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman. *Athens Journal of Education*, 5(3), 261-282.
- AL-Balushi, H. M. A., & Mat Saad, N.S. (2021). Improving Classroom Observation through Training: A qualitative Study in College of Technology in Oman. *Arab World English Journal*, 12 (4) 415-425. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.27>
- Al-Jardani, K. S., Siraj, S., & Abedalaziz, N. (2012). A Need for a Framework for Curriculum Evaluation in Oman. *Journal on English Language Teaching*, 2(4), 1-6.
- Al-Kiyumi, A., & Hammad, W. (2019). Instructional supervision in the Sultanate of Oman: Shifting roles and practices in a stage of educational reform. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 22(2), 237-249.
- Al-Mahdi, O. (2019). Action research and teachers' professional development: Examples and reflections. *International Educational Research*, 2(3), p37-p37.
- Al-Malki, M. A., & Weir, K. (2014). A comparative analysis between the assessment criteria used to assess graduating teachers of Rustaq College (Oman) and Griffith University (Australia) during the teaching practicum. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(12), 28-42.
- Alyahmadi, Hamad & Al-kiyumi, Amal (2014). The consequences of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development in Oman.
- Alyahmadi, Hamad & Alfahdi, Rashid (2014). Evaluation tools utilized by teacher evaluators in Oman: a qualitative analysis. *European Journal of Educational Studies*. 6(1). 33- 53.
- Çetin, C., & Bayrakçı, M. (2019). Teacher Professional Development Models for Effective Teaching and Learning in Schools. *The Online Journal of Quality in Higher Education*, 6(1), 32-38.
- Delvaux, E., Vanhoof, J., Tuytens, M., Vekeman, E., Devos, G., & Van Petegem, P. (2013). How may teacher evaluation have an impact on professional development? A multilevel analysis. *Teaching and teacher education*, 36, 1-11.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2007). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (2nd Edn.) (pp. 1 - 45). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Glatthorn, A. (1995). Teacher Development. In Anderson, L. (Ed.) *International encyclopedia of teaching and teacher education* (pp. 41-46). Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd. leadership. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Glickman, C. (1990). *Supervision of instruction: a developmental approach* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hussin, S. (2017). Spiral dynamics in the implementation of performance-based teacher evaluation policy in a centralized education system. *MOJEM: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management*, 2(2), 22-37
- Ministry of Labour. (2021, December). *Manual of Individual Performance Appraisal System at the Administrative Apparatus of the State*. <https://www.ibriect.edu.om/IPMS/PDF/ejada-manual.pdf>
- Northcote, M., Reynaud, D., Kilgour, P., Boddey, C., McLoughlin, C., Rickards, T., & Gosselin, K. P. (2016). Using Online Teaching Threshold Concepts in Transformative Professional Learning Curricula for Novice Online Educators.
- Peterson, K., & Peterson, C. (2006). *Effective teacher evaluation: A guide for principals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Salih, A., & Omar, L. (2022). Action Research-based Online Teaching in Oman: Teachers' Voices and Perspectives. *World*, 12(8).
- Sparks, D., & Loucks-Horsley, S. (1989). Five models of staff development for teachers. *Journal of Staff Development*, 10(4), 40-57.
- Stronge, J., & Tucker, P. (2003). *Handbook on teacher evaluation: Assessing and improving performance*: Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

- Voogt, J. M., Pieters, J. M., & Handelzalts, A. (2016). Teacher collaboration in curriculum design teams: Effects, mechanisms, and conditions. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 22(3-4), 121-140.
- Williams, R.T. (2020). A Systematic Review of the Continuous Professional Development for Technology Enhanced Learning Literature. *Engineering International*.
- Yin, R. (2014). *Applications of case study research: Design and methods*: Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.